



THE RED DRESS IS THE NATIONAL SYMBOL FOR WOMEN AND HEART DISEASE AWARENESS

THE HEART TRUTH CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

The Heart Truth: Heart Disease is the #1 Killer of Women

Less than half of women know that heart disease is their biggest health threat and most fail to make the connection between risk factors—such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol—and their personal risk of developing heart disease. *The Heart Truth* is that one out of every three American women dies of heart disease.

The Heart Truth Campaign: Serious Messages for Women's Heart Health

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), part of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is sponsoring a national awareness campaign called *The Heart Truth* in partnership with the Office on Women's Health, DHHS; American Heart Association; WomenHeart: the National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease; and other organizations committed to the health and well-being of women.

The Heart Truth campaign is primarily targeted to women ages 40 to 60, the time when a woman's risk of heart disease begins to increase. However, it's never too early—or too late—to take action to prevent and control the risk factors since heart disease develops over time and can start at a young age—even in the teen years.

The campaign warns women about heart disease and provides tools to help them take action against its risk factors. Its message is paired with an arresting visual—the Red Dress—the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness.

Campaign Background:

The Heart Truth campaign began in response to recommendations of more than 70 experts in women's health who met in March 2001 to develop a national action plan to reduce the toll of heart disease on American women. The campaign was developed with input from partner organizations and women's focus groups conducted across the country. These groups revealed that most women underestimate their personal risk and do not fully understand the devastating impact that heart disease has on one's life and family. The research strongly supported the urgent need to tell women about their risk of heart disease and how to lower it.

What's a Red Dress Got to Do With It?

As *The Heart Truth* campaign developed, the need for an attention-getting reminder to connect women with heart disease became clear. In February 2003, *The Heart Truth* debuted its Red Dress Collection at Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week, bringing the issue of women and heart disease to the national spotlight. This debut introduced the Red Dress as the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness.

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In February 2004, the Red Dress symbol came to life at a star-studded fashion show to introduce the Red Dress Collection 2004 at Olympus Fashion Week. During the show, top models walked the runway, showcasing designs from 26 of the most prestigious American fashion designers. The Red Dress Collection 2004 debuted in New York City on National Wear Red Day, Friday, February 6, 2004.

The Red Dress symbol links a woman's focus on her "outer self" to the need to also focus on her "inner self," especially her heart health. The Red Dress works as a visual red alert to convey the message that "Heart Disease Doesn't Care What You Wear—It's the #1 Killer of Women."

Campaign Resources and Activities:

The campaign offers a wide variety of resources to help individuals and local communities spread *The Heart Truth*, including:

- Educational materials for women to learn about heart disease and how to reduce their risks, including materials in Spanish
- Speaker's Kit—a "talk-in-a-box"—and other promotional materials to facilitate spreading *The Heart Truth* message in local communities
- Online Toolkit containing activity ideas and materials to help individuals and organizations plan their own *Heart Truth* events
- Online Activity Registry allowing organizations to share what they have done and learn about what other groups across the nation are doing to help spread *The Heart Truth*
- The Red Dress pin, the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness
- Compelling photos and stories of real women telling how heart disease changed their lives
- National public service advertising (print, radio, and television)
- Partnerships with national non-profit organizations reinforced at the local level to extend the campaign's reach and message
- Corporate partnerships to expand resources and enhance visibility of *The Heart Truth* campaign's message

In addition, the following activities bring *The Heart Truth* directly to women in local communities nationwide:

- Red Dress Single City Community Events: The Single City Tour brings a sampling of the Red Dress Collection to communities nationwide. Local hospitals, community groups, and women's health organizations sponsor Red Dress-themed health fairs, health screenings, luncheons, fashion shows, and Red Dress gala events to extend the reach of *The Heart Truth* messages.

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- *The Heart Truth* Road Show: From March to May 2004, *The Heart Truth* Road Show traveled to shopping malls in Philadelphia, Chicago, San Diego, Dallas, and Miami to raise awareness of women and heart disease by providing free risk factor screenings. The exhibit also featured a stunning display of the Red Dresses and provided important heart health information to women. *The Heart Truth* Road Show helped raise awareness that heart disease is the #1 killer of women among more than 70,000 people in the communities it visited.

To learn more, or to view and order *The Heart Truth* materials, visit the campaign Web pages at www.hearttruth.gov.

For More Information:

- **National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute**
www.hearttruth.gov, 301-592-8573, TTY: 240-629-3255
- **Office on Women's Health, DHHS**
National Women's Health Information Center
www.4woman.gov, 1-800-994-WOMAN, TDD: 1-888-220-5446
- **American Heart Association**
www.americanheart.org, 1-888-MY HEART
- **WomenHeart: the National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease**
www.womenheart.org, 202-728-7199

